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FM AMEMBASSY KIGALI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6619
INFO RUEHXR/RWANDA COLLECTIVE
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUZEFAA/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE

C O N F I D E N T I A L KIGALI 000065

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/02/2020
TAGS: [KTIP](#) [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [CG](#) [RW](#)
SUBJECT: NO EVIDENCE OF CHILD SOLDIER RECRUITMENT FROM
RWANDA IN 2009

Classified By: Ambassador W. Stuart Symington for reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: G/TIP officer Rachel Yousey, AF/RSA officer Learned Dees and Emboffs met January 21-27 with MONUC, UNHCR, Rwanda Demobilization and Reintegration Commission (RDRC), the Ministry of Local Government (MINALOC), and visited the Muhazi Rehabilitation Center for former child soldiers to investigate possible recruitment by DRC-based armed groups of Rwandan children in 2009. The message was consistent throughout all meetings and visits: there are no credible reports of recruitment of child soldiers in Rwanda in 2009. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) Dees and Emboffs met January 23 with MONUC staff including MONUC/Kigali head of office Joe Felli, MONUC/Kigali poloff Alexander Tolstukhin, MONUC/Kigali senior military liaison Col. Bathily Cheickna (Mali), MONUC/Goma military liaison Col. Deacen (FNU, British Army), and MONUC director of DDRRR Gregory "Gromo" Alex. In response to Dees' question about child soldier recruitment, Alex estimated that "perhaps ten" (adult) ex-combatants went back to DRC from Rwanda in 2009, "representing 0.01 percent" of all combatants, and said MONUC was not aware of any recruitment by CNDP or FDLR of child soldiers from Rwandan in 2009. It is "very rare" to see child soldiers from Rwanda, he said; most child soldiers in the DRC are Congolese. The last recruitment from Rwanda he knew of took place in 2008, when UNICEF found ten Rwandan child soldiers in the DRC. "Within three months," he said, "the Rwandan government reacted and since then there have been no more reports of child soldiers being recruited" from Rwanda.

13. (C) Dees, Yousey, and Poloff met January 22 with UNHCR/Rwanda country representative, Annette Nyekan, and UNHCR/Rwanda senior protection officer, Honorine Sommet-Lange. Nyekan said that recruitment of child soldiers from Rwanda was a problem in 2007 and 2008, but said that since then, there have been no credible reports of recruitment in Rwanda. She reported that UNHCR camp staff and NGO partner staff have not noticed large numbers of missing refugees from the camps and that refugees have not reported recruitment of children from the camps as they did in 2007 and 2008. According to Nyekan, in 2007, refugee mothers who had children at boarding schools in the DRC forbade their children from returning to Rwanda during holidays because of the fear of recruitment.

14. (C) Yousey and Poloff met January 21 with Alexis Rutsindintwarane, demobilization and child protection officer at RDRC. In response to Yousey's question about child soldiers returning to Rwanda, Rutsindintwarane said that they trickled in during 2009, usually two or three in a group of returning adult ex-combatants or refugees. In 2009, RDRC reunited about 75 children with their families. Rutsindintwarane said that the majority of the former child soldiers had been with the FDLR, and most were either born in

the DRC or went there at a young age. He said that the RDRC had no reports of armed groups recruiting children from Rwanda in 2009.

15. (C) Dees, Yousey, and Poloff met January 22 with Innocent Ngango, coordinator of the refugee commission. Ngango said that there are approximately 53,000 Congolese refugees in three camps in Rwanda. MINALOC camp representatives and refugee representatives had no reports of recruitment of child soldiers from Rwanda in 2009. However, Ngango said that there were reports of FDLR recruiting Rwandans from refugee camps in Uganda.

16. (C) Yousey and Poloff visited the Muhazi Rehabilitation Center for former child soldiers January 23. The RDRC opened the center in Ruhengeri in 2004 and transferred it to Muhazi in 2006. The center registered 51 former child soldiers in 2009. The former child soldiers, all Rwandan, were mainly combatants or living with combatants of the FDLR, although a few were with other armed groups. The children that returned to Rwanda were either captured during operations and sent to MONUC, who then transported them to Rwanda, or escaped and made their way to MONUC centers. According to the center records, some children were with the FDLR for as few as two years, and some up to ten years. The children received at the center in 2009 were either born in the DRC or went there at a young age. According to the center director, there were no children in the center that had been recruited from Rwanda in 2009 and he had heard no reports of recruitment of children from Rwanda in 2009. Children generally remain at the center for three months where they receive civic education, medical treatment, counseling, and reintegration services. In the meantime RDRC with the assistance of ICRC works to locate the

families of the children. Poloff and Yousey talked with one 17-year old former child soldier who left Rwanda for the DRC in 1994 (at the age of 2) with his father. In 2006, FDLR abducted him from his village in Walikale. He returned to Rwanda in 2009 with the assistance of MONUC.

SYMINGTON